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FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General appeals for $180 million in new resources for United Nations agencies to aid Afghanistan; expresses deep concern over the recent fighting in Kabul.

+ Speakers addressing Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro stress that different regions have different environmental problems, and solutions must be individually tailored.

+ Security Council sanctions against Yugoslavia creates difficulties for relief operations, according to spokeswoman for United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

+ On 25th anniversary of Israeli occupation, Palestinian Rights Committee protests conditions in West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today appealed to the international community to provide $180 million to United Nations agencies for emergency humanitarian assistance for Afghanistan. He pointed out that the consolidation of peace and national unity would contribute to the success of the appeal.

In a report today, the Secretary-General said the resources sought in the current appeal were to meet the emergency requirements of the next seven months (June to December) and to cover a shortfall of over $76 million in the ongoing Operation Salam Programme for 1992.

"The level of destruction in Afghanistan is hard to imagine unless witnessed at first hand", the Secretary-General states in the appeal. With few of the donor countries and no international financial institutions having reestablished their presence in the country, the humanitarian activity of the United Nations system takes on a critical importance.

In a separate statement issued at Headquarters today, the Secretary-General expressed concern about the recent eruption of fighting in

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Kabul resulting in many deaths. He called on all parties concerned to exercise restraint, resolve their differences by dialogue and release those who had been kidnapped.

No effort should be spared, he said, to consolidate peace, promote national unity and safeguard the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the country. "The greatest challenge facing the Afghan people and their leaders is the reconstruction and rehabilitation of their devastated country, and to facilitate the return of the millions of Afghan refugees who have been waiting for a decade to return to their homeland." The United Nations stood ready to assist them in meeting that challenge, concluded the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Benon Sevan, who led a United Nations inter-agency team to Afghanistan from 11 to 15 May 1992, discussed the appeal with correspondents at Headquarters today. He said that 14 years of war had left the Afghan public sector in a state of total collapse. Mr. Sevan stressed that even without the problem of repatriating more than 6 million refugees, the country faced an emergency situation.

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Continuing the general debate of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro, many speakers have emphazised that different regions have different environmental problems, and solutions have to be individually tailored.

They said that in the North, the talk was about the quality of life, while in the South, life itself was at stake. For the poor, the discussion of global issues in various multilateral conventions was unconnected to any reality of which they were aware. For those people, improving the environment meant safe surroundings and housing.

Thorbjorn Berntsen, Minister for the Environment of Norway stressed that attacking poverty through policy change must be a main element of the follow-up to the Conference. International transfer of financial resources to developing countries was essential, he said, and Norway would continue to maintain a high level of development assistance as well as contribute new and additional finances for measures to combat environmental problems, he said.

William H. Draper III, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) said no global plan to protect the common habitat would be realistic unless the needs and concerns of people in developing countries are taken into consideration. Such a plan would succeed only if North and South could work together and only if environment was perceived as a unifying link, not a divisive issue, he said.

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The Security Council's resolution 757 (1992), which imposed mandatory sanctions against Yugoslavia on 30 May, is causing some difficulty for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

In a statement from Geneva this morning, the Spokeswoman for UNHCR, Sylvana Foa, said trucks carrying relief supplies had been held up at the Austrian/German border and the Agency was having difficulty withdrawing money from the bank and obtaining fuel, which she cited as its biggest problem.

According to Ms. Foa, article 10 of the resolution exempts the United Nations Protection Force in Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR); the Conference on Yugoslavia; and the European Community Monitor Mission from the sanctions. But it does not specify United Nations relief agencies such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC); the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF); the World Health Organization (WHO); or UNHCR. She said UNHCR had asked the Sanctions Committee for official recognition as a humanitarian agency and for "a blank check" to enable UNHCR to operate effectively. Under article five of the resolution, money could not be transferred into the area except for humanitarian purposes.

Ms. Foa said that an estimated 1.71 million displaced and refugees representing "more than 10 per cent of the world's refugees today" were in Europe, compared to a year and a half ago when only three per cent were there. She listed over 1.3 million displaced persons in Yugoslavia; 275,000 registered refugees and an estimated 100,000 unregistered refugees in other countries of Europe.

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Today is the 25th anniversary of the beginning of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem. Marking the occasion in a letter to the Secretary-General, the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People says that Israel's ongoing occupation and refusal to implement the decisions of the Security Council and General Assembly threaten the credibility of the United Nations at a time of historic importance for its efforts to create a more just and peaceful world.

Summing up the impact of the occupation, the Committee states that over 60 percent of the West Bank and Gaza have been confiscated, and some 23,000 Israeli citizens have moved permanently to about 212 settlements throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, declaring it part of a so-called "Greater Israel".

Since the start of the intifadah, it notes, the repression and oppression of the Palestinian civilian population have increased. From December 1987 to March of this year, human rights organizations have reported that at least 1,032 Palestinians have been killed and over 121,000 injured by Israeli forces.

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